



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## **ICE ARRESTS 15 MEMBERS OF MS-13 STREET GANG IN WASHINGTON, D.C. AND NORTHERN VIRGINIA**

***-- More than 135 MS-13 Gang Members Arrested Nationwide Under Operation Community Shield --***

WASHINGTON, DC – Allan J. Doody, Special Agent-in-Charge for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Washington, D.C., today announced that ICE agents, assisted by the U.S. Marshals Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, have arrested 15 members of the violent street gang Mara Salvatrucha 13 (MS-13) in northern Virginia over the past week.

In addition, ICE agents placed immigration detainers on eight (8) other members of MS-13 who are already in federal, state, or local custody. These detainers allow ICE to take custody of these individuals upon completion of their jail sentences and immediately place them into immigration proceedings for ultimate removal from the country.

ICE agents arrested all 15 gang members on administrative immigration violations. Four of the arrests took place in Washington, D.C., while the remainder took place in northern Virginia. The suspects are from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. At least one of those arrested faces immediate removal from the United States to El Salvador as an alien with an outstanding removal order.

One of those arrested was Lever Alvarenga-Gamez, an active MS-13 gang member from Honduras who is in the United States illegally. At the time of his arrest, ICE agents found a three-foot machete under his bed. Alvarenga-Gamez was also in possession of a false Social Security card and a false resident alien card.

One of those on whom ICE agents placed an immigration detainer was Wilfredo Montoya, an MS-13 gang member from El Salvador who is in the United States illegally. Montoya is incarcerated at the Prince William County jail facing charges for murder. He was previously convicted in Falls Church, VA for carrying a concealed weapon and received a six-month sentence.

“Getting these individuals off the streets is a priority for ICE and our law enforcement partners. These arrests demonstrate that we will continue to keep the pressure on MS-13 and other street gangs with the goal of reducing crime in our community,” said ICE Special Agent-in-Charge Doody.

The arrests are the latest in Operation Community Shield, a nationwide ICE initiative designed to disrupt, dismantle, and prosecute violent gang members by employing the full range of authorities and investigative tools available to ICE. To date, ICE agents have arrested more than 135 MS-13 gang members across the country as part of Operation Community Shield.

Under this initiative, ICE is using its broad immigration authorities (both criminal and administrative) against gang members, as well as its customs authorities in targeting narcotics smuggling, money laundering and in pursuing asset forfeiture.

Operation Community Shield also involves strong partnerships and cooperation with existing federal, state, and local anti-gang efforts. ICE uses intelligence on gang organizations and leadership provided by state and local authorities. This information is then used whenever possible to arrest, prosecute, and/or remove individual gang members. ICE also works through its 54 Attaché offices overseas to cooperate with foreign governments that are also experiencing gang problems.

The initial target of Operation Community Shield is MS-13, which is one of the largest and most violent street gangs in the United States. The majority of MS-13 members are foreign nationals in this country illegally, making them subject to ICE's criminal and administrative immigration authorities. Many MS-13 members also derive income from the sale of illegal drugs and other contraband, making them subject to ICE's counter-drug, financial, and other investigative authorities. Seizure and forfeiture of illegally-derived assets are another component of this initiative.

Over the coming months, ICE will be using all these tools in a combined fashion with the ultimate goal of dismantling MS-13 organizations across the country. Ultimately, Operation Community Shield will also target other violent street gangs.

**#ICE#**

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities*